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## CLEAN ENERGY FOR LOW INCOME COMMUNITIES ACCELERATOR

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**C**ertain barriers may prevent low-income residents from accessing energy efficiency and renewable energy programs that would help reduce their energy burden. To remove such obstacles for low-income households, state and local agencies may establish an advisory or steering committee of low-income community stakeholders to inform the development of energy programs, as illustrated by examples in Massachusetts and Illinois.

### Benefits

A diverse group of stakeholders that understands low-income communities is well-equipped to advise state and local agencies and identify barriers to adoption of energy efficiency and renewable energy measures, such as challenges related to braiding of funding to finance projects, lack of familiarity with technologies, and practical limitations related to accessing programs and meeting requirements to qualify for participation. A group of stakeholders representing various interests may be able to develop more inclusive and effective solutions. They may also develop clearly-outlined plans to help access funding opportunities from state development agencies or other organizations, as was the case in Massachusetts and Illinois.

### Key Elements

A stakeholder advisory committee that provides diverse viewpoints can include private citizens as well as staff from state agencies, utilities, community action agencies, nonprofits, and other housing and energy organizations. An effective committee would set regular meetings and aim to make specific recommendations within a predetermined timeframe. To capture a wide range of participants in terms of organization type and geographic distribution, programs can offer multiple avenues for meeting participation, such as in-person, by webinar, or through delegable proxy. The committee should also utilize inclusive language in its communications and solicit feedback from targeted communities.

### Example

Massachusetts's Affordable Access Working Group (AAWG) met during 2016 to review and report on barriers to renewable energy investment for the state's low- and moderate-income (LMI) residents. The working group represented public and private subsidized housing, nonprofit organizations, for-profit developers, residents in naturally occurring affordable housing, and technology experts. The group found that LMI homeowners often do not have capital on hand to purchase clean and efficient technologies, and they have less access to conventional financing. In addition, landlords of LMI renters may be unwilling to invest in improvements when tenants pay their own bills and would therefore attain the associated bill savings. The working group recommended aligning housing and energy program processes, fostering demand for energy efficiency and renewable energy in LMI communities, and targeting very low-income residents in funding new program and policy development.

Another example of a multi-stakeholder advisory committee is Illinois's Income-Qualified Energy Efficiency Advisory Committee (IAQ), whose creation was mandated by the Future Energy Jobs Act. The IAQ meets separately in the north and south sections of the state to correspond with the two major utility territories. It convenes a wide selection of community action agencies, implementation contractors, and utilities administering income-qualified energy efficiency programs to focus on addressing the needs of this specific customer segment. The Advisory Committee offers limited stipends to enable residents of low-income and disadvantaged communities to participate in the discussions.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Meeting information, including utility presentations and agendas, can be found here:  
<http://www.ilsag.info/economically-disadvantaged-advisory-committee.html>

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## Applicability

This strategy is applicable to any state with low-income energy efficiency programs. Ideally, the final recommendations of the working group are developed in coordination with a timeline for funding opportunities. For example, after the AAWG's final report was published, the [Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources](#) and Massachusetts Clean Energy Center released multiple funding opportunities to support proposed solutions. In conjunction with existing initiatives, the committee was able to make impactful progress in attaining efficient and renewable energy technologies for low- to moderate-income residents.

## Implementation Considerations

Stakeholders may come from housing development, energy efficiency and renewable energy, community banks, and other types organizations as detailed in the [stakeholder engagement](#) section of the Clean Energy for Low Income Communities Accelerator (CELICA) Toolkit. Diverse viewpoints will allow the committee to make specific, guided recommendations. For example, one recommendation from Massachusetts's Affordable Access to Clean and Efficient Energy Initiative is to connect with the [Massachusetts Department of Energy Resource's](#) Green Communities program, Regional Planning Agencies, and municipalities to take advantage of existing community connections to local low- and moderate-income populations. This is a clearly specified goal that is attainable due to established stakeholder networks.

## Links

- [MA Affordable Access to Clean and Efficient Energy Initiative Update \(2017\)](#), Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources
- [MA Affordable Access to Clean and Efficient Energy Initiative](#), State of Massachusetts
- [Clean Energy for Low Income Communities Accelerator Toolkit: Stakeholder Engagement](#), U.S. Department of Energy